

Educators in Solidarity: Teacher and Student Perspectives on What Works

Educators in Solidarity (EIS) is a group working to build our collective capacity as anti-racist educators through activism, advocacy, and outreach. Educators are uniquely situated to address racism by institutional change and empowering students to self-advocate. We are committed to ongoing dialogue about systemic racism in our schools and communities.

In our community meetings, we discuss what is and is not working in our classrooms and schools. Here's what AISD teachers, students, and community members attending EIS meetings are saying:

- **Banning discretionary suspension for pre-K through second grade students is the right thing for AISD students and teachers.** Discretionary suspensions disproportionately impact students of color and special education students, reinforcing inequity and racist stereotypes. Discretionary suspension also frequently fails to address the root causes of difficult classroom behavior, and is not an effective method for teaching students the social and emotional skills they need to succeed in the classroom.
- **Campus culture built on trusting relationships goes a long way.** Students who are struggling need support to learn appropriate classroom behavior, help to understand and manage their emotions, and instruction that helps them get and stay engaged in learning. Removals and referrals, particularly without connecting students to the resources they need to be successful, are counter-productive to these goals. Successful campuses have a culture built on relationships, effectively utilize their counselors and other resources – including the behavioral and mental health support available through Child Study Teams and programs like Communities in Schools.
- **Educators and school communities need support to combat both racism and implicit bias.** Teachers, administrators, and school staff would benefit from taking intentional steps to understand their communities, encourage cross-cultural understanding, and combat persistent racial stereotypes. Ideas to achieve this goal include neighborhood walks to meet families and students, campus clean-ups and community gatherings, and meaningful professional development to help educators understand and examine their own experiences and privilege.
- **AISD has taken promising steps that we as a community of educators can build upon.** AISD prides itself on being at the forefront of the social-emotional learning (SEL) movement. We are excited to see AISD schools pioneering restorative discipline and restorative practices as well as other strategies we know work, like mindfulness, common behavior expectations, TBRI, and positive behavior support. EIS educators want to be part of ensuring all campuses, as well as the SEL and Cultural Proficiency and Inclusiveness Departments, are provided with the support and resources they need to effectively implement these promising practices effectively and with fidelity across the district.

Banning discretionary suspension for pre-K through second grade students is a critical first step, but as educators, we are acutely aware that the ban alone will not create the just and equitable AISD we are all working to build. **In line with our mission to combat racism and pursue institutional change, EIS looks forward to the opportunity to continue to engage with AISD and work together to create a comprehensive, just, and district-wide plan to help all students succeed.**